

The terrorist acts in the USA, although a surprise (in terms of time, place and the object of attack) were a «forecastable» response to the country's international policy. In promoting democratic values and its own interests, the United States acts rather tough using force both within its coalitions and independently, mandated both by the UN and its own government. Objectively, it couldn't but give rise to discontented sentiments, so the USA, as world leader, has a lot of enemies. Among the possible threats to its national security, the United States considered the possibility of such terrorist acts. And yet it failed to prevent them...

In order to understand what the USA and the entire civilized world were confronted with on September 11 and to forecast its possible consequences, it is necessary to single out the characteristic features of this terrorist act.

One: the monstrous (by its thoroughly premeditated scheme, cruelty and impact) terrorist act was carried out not in Israel, Spain, Northern Ireland, Turkey or Russia, but in the United States - the country which is by right believed to be the world leader, which possesses the greatest economic and military potential, and which plays a key role in world financial organizations and decides the fates of nations. After September 11, 2001, it became clear to everyone: if *this* was not preventable by the Americans, then no one else, no country is able to bar such a terrorist act single-handedly. It's time to give up talk about the importance of international cooperation in security and start being practical. Challenged by threats like *this* (terrorism is but one of them, there are others, too), all civilized nations must join their efforts, even sacrificing their conflicting economic, political and other interests - there is simply no other way.

Two: unlike the previous attacks of terrorists outside the USA (on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the warship in Yemen, the Marines barracks in Beirut), this attack was on US territory. Its organizers wanted to show America that it was possible to «hit» on its own territory, and the aim was attained. The Americans who had never seen a war on their streets felt all its terror for the first time, the country was shocked, the bodies of government and a number of activities were paralyzed for a short while. «America under attack» - after the «black Tuesday», the whole world remembers these words on our TV screens. The US Government took the terrorist act as an act of aggression - America was attacked. It means that the USA can (and surely will) deliver a retaliatory strike in self-defense, proceeding from both its own National Security Strategy and Article 51 of the UN Charter which gives such a right to any state in case of aggression. Besides, for the first time in NATO's 52-year history, Article 5 of the 1949 Washington Treaty was invoked: on Wednesday, the next day after the terrorist act, 18 NATO allies declared their solidarity - they expressed their readiness to render the necessary assistance regarding the attack on the United States as an attack on the whole Alliance. A military conflict appears now very likely to escalate...

Three: the terrorists have proved in practice that it is possible to attack a stronger enemy by an effective *asymmetrical* strike. They didn't have to use modern military technologies, high-precision weapons, expensive delivery means, sophisticated targeting systems affordable to a limited number of armies. Obviously, the terrorists even did without firearms: a knife, a gas shocker and physical strength sufficed (the complete picture of what happened will be clear after the investigation). The world has also seen that a small group of people (a tactical unit) is capable of actions the effects of which may reach a strategic and even a geostrategic level, without using thousands of tanks, dozens of divisions or aircraft carriers, without moving flags of mock fronts on war-game maps year after year.

Four: having buried thousands of innocent people under the debris, the terrorists delivered a deadly blow to a beloved concept - the values of the American nation. Unlike many other countries, the United States values the lives of its citizens exceptionally highly. This issue became especially sensitive for the American people (including politicians) after the Vietnam war. An exemplary fact: in 1993, pressured by the public, the USA had to terminate its military operation in Somalia, after CNN «delivered» to every American home terrifying pictures of dead American soldiers dragged by hilarious aborigines along the streets of Mogadishu. Apropos, the USA retaliated on the enemy before withdrawing - at least a score of Somalians were killed per each killed American. There is a notable tradition: the US President and Vice President personally meet at the Washington air base the planes that bring home the bodies of American servicemen killed in action abroad. This is one more proof of how highly a human life is valued in the United States and how highly its government is responsible for the death of its citizens. This fact makes clear the perfidy of the attackers' plot: at its final stage, the operation could have been stopped only by ordering American fighters (or Air Defense) to shoot civil planes, that is deliberately killing their own innocent civilians. It is extremely difficult to make and carry out such decisions (especially after the Americans downed by mistake a passenger plane over the Persian Gulf several years ago). There is no doubt that on September 11 America was confronted not just by uneducated amateurs (we don't mean those who executed the attacks), but a powerful force well learned in strategy, the history and mentality of American society. The problem (for the terrorists now) is that they «overdid it» and so they may get not quite what they counted on: the strike of *such* a force, *such* a number of deaths will not divide, but on the contrary - unite the American nation around its government, all internal problems and conflicts will become minor.

Five: the terrorist acts were thoroughly planned in the political and military sense and carried out very efficiently. The targets they hit were far from unimportant: they attacked Washington and New York - the administrative and financial centers of the USA. They selected exceptionally important targets: the Pentagon - the realm of the world's strongest army, the World Trade Center twin towers - the seat of the biggest American companies and banks, the US President's Residence (the strike was averted). The organizers were very familiar with the drawbacks of the country's internal security system - the absence of passport control and scrupulous customs examination at domestic airlines (at many US airports passengers and their baggage get registered even at taxi stops) and also with pilots' carelessness - on many flights the cabin is open and any passenger can walk in freely. These details are known by those who reside in the United States or visit it frequently. The preparations for such a complex operation should have taken at least several weeks, if not months; it involved dozens of people (both residents of the United States and other countries); there was an intensive exchange of information (on US territory and via international links); qualified executors were selected, including experienced pilots (experts believe that such a task in *extreme* conditions could be carried out only by certified pilots with at least a 100 - 150 flight hour experience); they were trained for joint coordinated actions. But during all that time neither the organizers nor the executors of the terrorist act were spotted by US security services! This testifies not only to the tragic (by its consequences) failure of security, but certainly to the terrorists' high level of organization and professionalism.

Finally, one more circumstance is evident: the executors were fully aware that they would die. They were not mad, they were not kamikaze bombers «zombied» by someone or something on the day of action. Their psyche were more than steady, they were deeply motivated and able to keep their sang-froid for a long time, at least the time of preparation. They died leaving behind thousands of dead bodies, shock and confusion in hundreds of millions of hearts, without making any political demands. Some experts have begun to talk about a new type of terrorism, different from the «traditional» political one, experienced by many countries (Budyonovsk, Russia, for example [Chechen terrorist attack]). This kind of terrorism is believed to be characterized by a readiness to perish in some symbolic act of revenge, to plunge as many people as possible into shock and fear, and the very act of terror is felt by the kamikaze as a success, he may even have no other goal. It is difficult to say now whether we deal with a new type of terrorism or the «traditional» terrorism, with a declaration of goals and demands to be announced later. What is really important is the fact that kamikazes who die consciously to kill thousands may kill millions. On that Tuesday, they might as well have taken aboard a few containers with some lethal virus - a biological weapon of mass destruction such as poor countries can afford. A weapon the production, storage and transportation of which are much more difficult to control than nuclear weapons. A weapon that even the USA is unable to cope with - it has been proven more than once during imitation exercises in recent years. This is another possible and real threat which no nation in the world is able to contain single-handedly. There are other threats, too. The conclusion is obvious: the world community must jointly work out systemic approaches to the prevention of such acts; September 11 must become a starting point, a moment of truth, a qualitative change in mankind's consciousness.

What are the possible developments in the future? They will depend largely on the US government's position and practical steps. The world will see no shifts in the US foreign policy toward «isolationism», nor will it see G. W. Bush give up his Missile Defense plans. On the contrary - the United States will pursue an even more intensive foreign policy and do it demonstratively, showing that it is the leader and that no one dares dictate his will to it. That is how the American mind reacts to calamities. The economic damage will be repaired very soon - the US economy is strong enough.

One shouldn't draw apocalyptic pictures of «a regional war», «a third world war» or «an end to civilization». There will be neither a regional, nor a world war. There is no «kamikaze» state in the world that would dare to oppose the entire civilized community in the wake of September 11.

Most probably, what stands behind the terrorist act is not a state, but a non-governmental (not controlled by government) structure. Its real organizers will never claim responsibility openly - that would be their last day. But the culprits will be found - there is no doubt about that. It is very important that a retaliation strike not happen before they are found. A US strike on the wrong target, without a hundred per cent proof of guilt, would have an adverse effect: censure, a split of the world community, more violence and terror. Circumstances are pushing George Bush to push the button...

The world will understand that a retaliatory strike on the training camps in the countries that provide a «cover-up» to terrorists as well as that country's international isolation. George Bush has stated that he will make no difference between those who executed the terrorist act and the governments that shelter terrorists, and this is a very serious warning. It is likely to be a strike by a coalition involving NATO allies. At least Great Britain's participation is clear.

It is obvious that the United States and other Western countries will increase pressure on Palestine, Pakistan, Iran and Iraq which equally support paramilitary troops of other countries, or which are in sympathy with them, or which then are unable to control their subordinate structures. The pressure may involve diplomatic, political and economic mechanisms, and in particular cases - force.

The US and its allies' security services will start (or have started) an undeclared war against the structures at least hypothetically involved in the terrorist act's organization; the latter will be cut off from financial and arms supplies, their leaders will be exterminated, and that will be done without a wide media coverage. New outbursts of violence and terrorism will be a likely response.

Success in consolidating efforts to fight terrorism will depend to a great extent on Russia's, Israel's and Turkey's position. These countries may take advantage of the USA's temporary weakness and confusion and to take their own tasks «on the quiet»: they may organize series of raids on the Chechens, Palestinians and Kurds, respectively. But these countries may as well resist the temptation, thus creating prerequisites for a qualitatively new cooperation in combating the threat of terrorism, together with the USA, for the sake of the future. The next week or two will show how they will act.

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